

CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD;

AND

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CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD.

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“Though I bear record of myself, my record is true; for I know whence I came, and whither I go.”—JOHN viii. 14.

RESTING confidently in the belief that Jesus is a teacher come from God, we stand upon what may be called distinctively Christian ground. Not that we mean to deny the Christian name to those who reject the supernatural element in revelation; but it is evident that there is a broad distinction here which we are compelled to recognize. However excellent the Christian system may be, so long as it fails in the claim to divine authority, Christianity can be no more to us than the best among the “philosophies” of the world. If all stand upon the same level of authority, we select one or other of them, according to our best judgment. The sole authority, after all, would be in our own minds. But when we have once admitted that Jesus came from God; that he was inspired by the Divine Spirit, to reveal the truth and the will of God; that “he spake with authority,” and not as the philosophers and scribes,—we are removed from the school of speculation to that of discipleship. We become learners, to sit at the feet of Jesus,—we look to him for the words of eternal life. The whole realm of theological inquiry is still before us; but there is an authority of final appeal. When we know

what Jesus taught, whether in precept or doctrine, it becomes to us the rule of our lives, the law of our thoughts.

I am not able, in this respect, to see any half-way ground. However much we may dispute concerning the instructions of Christ, we cannot dispute, after we have once admitted his divine mission, as to our duty in receiving and obeying his words. Perhaps it is here, and not in disputed doctrines, that the radical difference is found, indicated by the modern use of the word Evangelical. Unless the word is used merely for sectarian exclusiveness, as the Shibboleth of a party, the evangelical Christian is one who accepts the Evangel, or gospel, of Jesus Christ, as the authority, the final appeal, in matters of faith and practice. They who refuse to do this must regard Jesus merely as a human teacher, and, although they may call him "The Christ," may be still looking for another. Their effort must be, not so much to know the mind of Jesus, as to know their own minds. The name of Christian may be freely accorded to them if they claim it; because their lives may bear Christian fruit, and their conscientious purpose may be to live according to the pure spirit of Christianity. They may be nearer to Jesus, in fact, than many who are stronger in their belief. They are oftentimes seekers after truth, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, having really been educated by Christian influences up to the Christian standard, although intellectually disputing the Divine Christian authority. "To his own master every one standeth or falleth: who art thou that judgest another man's servant?"

But the distinction to which we refer is not the less real, and cannot be kept out of sight. Christian charity does not require, and allegiance to truth does not permit us, to neglect it. It is vital both in religion and theology. Are we disciples, or is Christ only first among equals? To

me, I confess, the question is one of infinite significance. Without deciding for others or judging them, it is to me a matter of infinite importance, to know whether I have a guide, a master, an authority, or not. I feel most deeply the comfort of those words which Jesus spoke to his disciples, before parting with them: "Peace I leave with you, my peace give I unto you; let not your heart be troubled, neither be ye afraid; as my Father spake unto me, even so have I spoken unto you." I would not, for the whole world, lose that confidence, that trust, that "répose which ever is the same." I would not, for the world, feel that all the great truths of religion depend, for their certainty to me, upon my own speculations. It is true that they are rational conclusions; and the more we study them, the more perfectly they seem in accordance with the natural laws of thought. The philosophical development of our own minds leads us continually back again to Christian truth. Natural religion, so called, culminates in the divine. But still I am thankful to God, that, on the portals of that resting-place of faith, it is written, "Thus saith the Lord." The perfect harmony between educated natural reason and the divine instructions of Jesus, should not deceive us. As, in moral philosophy, the highest goodness leads to the most perfect individual happiness, and the two ultimately coincide; and yet not happiness, but duty alone, must be recognized as the motive and law, or our seeking for happiness soon degenerates into self-seeking, which uses goodness as an instrument or means to a higher end, and sacrifices both means and end by the same mistake: so it is in the department of religious truth, that reason, guided by the divine authority, leads us to assured convictions concerning God and eternity, and we are betrayed into thinking that the conclusion belongs to our own natural thought, and that no submission to authority is longer

required. But let the authority be discarded, hold to the truth discovered as only a human deduction from human premises, and the established foundation begins to give way, the superstructure of faith begins to totter. We think, instead of believing; we hope, instead of trusting; and presently go out from that peaceful resting-place, as wanderers, to seek after God, if haply we may find him. By no such speculations concerning truth did the elders obtain their good report. By no such questionings and probable conclusions were the martyrs' noble host strengthened and glorified. By no such human philosophy, however transcendental, were the apostles inspired to exclaim, "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." That is the word of power, "through our Lord Jesus Christ." He spake that which he knew, and testified that which he had seen, and we receive his witness. Human hesitation and doubt may remain; the weakness of the flesh may make the spirit waver; but the anchor of Christian faith is sure and steadfast. We know in whom we have believed, and return to him, again and again, from all our inquiries, to hear the words of eternal life.

The question of divine authority being answered, the first and most natural inquiry, in the settlement of our religious faith, is that which concerns Jesus himself. We may, indeed, obey his commands and believe his doctrines, without knowing any thing more concerning him, than that he was an inspired teacher. But the confidence of our faith and the fervor of our devotion must depend a great deal upon our opinions concerning him who brings the instruction and the commands. Who was Jesus Christ? What place does he hold in the universe? What do we mean when we call him divine, and when we call him human? What was he, not only in his office, but in him-

self, in his own nature? How does he stand in his relation to God, and how in relation to man?

The form in which we have put these questions will at once show to any thoughtful person, that the answer cannot be sharply and exactly given. Our knowledge of spiritual life is so imperfect, our conception of spiritual existence is so dim, that we see through a glass darkly at the best, and not yet face to face. We do not yet know as we are known. Ask the same questions concerning yourself, your own existence, your exact place in the universe; your relation to God,—how it is that you are dependent upon him, and yet free; your relation to man,—how it is that we are all equal before God, and yet separated from each other, through imperceptible gradations, by a distance almost as great as that which separates the grovelling brute, living upon husks, from the angels that wait to do God's bidding nearest to his throne, so that the same human nature includes the lowest cannibal savage and the highest Christian philanthropist,—and you will feel the limitation of your ignorance and weakness concerning yourself, not less than when you are seeking to be wise above what is written concerning Jesus Christ. We are like children having learned the alphabet, who make experiment of their knowledge by reading the poetry of Milton and the speculations of Plato. He who inquires about the spirit's life and growth, whether of his own soul or of those who are above him or below him, will find himself in a world of mystery. Like the bird which rises for a time with strong and confident wing, but presently the thinness of the air, the weakness of his muscles, and the attraction of the earth, compel him to return, exhausted and weary, to a resting-place; so, in our researches for spiritual truth, we advance confidently, with the feeling of assured knowledge, positive both in denial and assertion,

sanguine in the hope of arriving at the ultimate truth; but soon, in the ascending flight, feel ourselves checked, limited, restrained, drawn back again to reconsider the premises of thought, compelled to seek a resting-place in the alphabet of Christianity. We begin with confidence, and come back with humility. We begin thinking ourselves little lower than the angels, and come back to prostrate ourselves before God, and exclaim, "What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him?" We begin with the thought that we can comprehend God himself, and all the mysteries of his infinity, and come back with the conviction that we do not even know ourselves. It is the practical lesson of humility, but also of conscious exaltation. Our hearts empty themselves of pride and arrogance, to become full of adoration and faith. We claim to know less; in reality, we know infinitely more. We would as soon think of bounding infinite space, as to define, in exact words, either the nature of God or of man, who was created in the image of God. But our consciousness of spiritual life and personal immortality becomes continually deeper; and the God, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, finds his dwelling-place in the humble and contrite heart.

Therefore let those who begin their theological inquiries with compass and line, to fix the exact boundaries of Christ's nature, as they would survey a field before buying it,—let them first try the experiment upon themselves. When they can tell me of their own souls, where the human ends and the divine begins, I will tell them the same concerning him. They who cannot tell what to think of John the Baptist must be content to remain in partial ignorance concerning him whose shoes John the Baptist was not worthy to bear. Something we may know, and I think abundantly enough for all the practical uses of life

and for its consolations. "My grace is sufficient for thee," was the answer to St. Paul, when he prayed that some thorn in the flesh should be removed. In like manner, the knowledge which we have is sufficient for us, if we use it well; and the truth which is made known may become more vitalizing to our souls because of that which remains unrevealed.

The principal source of knowledge concerning Jesus Christ must evidently be his testimony of himself. It is possible that his disciples were mistaken in their estimate of him, as we know they were during a great part of their lives; but his record of himself must be received as true. Even those who only admit that he was an honest, truth-telling man, must either modify that admission, or must equally admit that what he said of himself must be believed. But those who assent to his divine authority have committed themselves still more fully, and are no longer at liberty to question the truthfulness of his claims. It seems to me, that, among Christians, we may narrow down this question concerning Christ to the simple inquiry, "What did he himself say?" Both as to his exaltation and authority, and as to the limitations of these, if limitations exist, we are bound, as Christians, to rest upon his testimony, and have no right either to fall short of it, or to go beyond it.

After a careful examination of this testimony, we come to a clear and positive conviction upon at least two points in the case. First, that Jesus Christ claimed for himself a degree of dignity, authority, and power, such as no one else in all the records of history has ever claimed; and, secondly, that he distinctly declared the fact of limitation, and his own entire dependence upon God. These two propositions can be fully established by any one who will read the four Gospels with care. And although they may

leave a great deal that we wish to know still unsettled, they give a firm standing-ground of evangelical and reasonable belief.

Let us examine both propositions with the Bible before us ; for I think that many will be surprised at the clearness and fulness of the proof.

In the first place, we assert that Jesus uniformly claimed for himself dignity, knowledge, authority, power ; in a word, an elevation, both of nature and of office, such as no other teacher or lawgiver ever claimed. Neither Moses nor the prophets, nor Zoroaster nor Confucius nor Mahomet, nor any other whom history names, has dared to assume the position which Jesus assumed and maintained, by word and action, in his relation both to God and man. Nor do we refer, in this assertion, to special isolated passages, which ingenious critics may explain away, or get rid of as interpolations ; but it rests still more upon the general tone of Christ's language and demeanor. The Sermon on the Mount is the utterance of a Lawgiver and Judge, who claims the right to fulfil or to destroy. "You have heard that it was said in old times ;" but "I say unto you," that a new and better law is given. He declares the terms of acceptance with God, without hesitation, and claims a personal part in their enforcement. "Many shall say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord ; but I will profess unto them, I never knew you ; depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. vii. 22). Heaven and earth might pass away, but "my words shall not pass away" (Matt. xxiv. 35). He declared the sins of the penitent to be forgiven, and pronounced the sternest judgment of God upon the unbelieving and rebellious. He spoke of sins that could not be forgiven in this world, nor in the world to come (Matt. xii. 31). In speaking of the final judgment, or of the principles on which men will be judged, he

says, "Then shall the King" (meaning himself),—"then shall the King say, Come, ye blessed of my Father;" or "depart from me, ye accursed" (Matt. xxv. 34). "Whosoever confesses me before men, him will I also confess before the Father in heaven. Whosoever denieth me, him will I also deny" (Matt. x. 32). In speaking of the conflict of the world against himself, the chief stone of the corner, he said, "Whosoever falls on this stone shall be broken; but upon whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder" (Matt. xxi. 44). "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works" (Matt. xvi. 27). "All things are given to me of my Father," he said at another time; "and no man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him" (Matt. xi. 27). And then, having declared this closeness of relation with God, he turns himself towards man, with the ineffable dignity of saving love and power, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." When the disciples disputed concerning superiority, he rebuked them, and said, "Neither be ye called masters; for one is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren" (Matt. xxiii. 10). He distinctly declared himself, with a solemnity that indicates a peculiar meaning in the words, to be the Christ, the Anointed, the Messiah, "the Son of the living God;" and, when adjured by the high priest to tell them who he was, he added to such words as I have spoken, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matt. xxvi. 64). He taught his disciples, that, after he should leave them, his continued assistance and prayers for them would be essential, and said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my

name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii. 20). Before his leaving them, according to the gospel record, he spake to them and said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations;" that is, make disciples of them. I ask you to observe the absoluteness of authority, the comprehensiveness of the command, "baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" thus introducing himself into that close affinity with God the Father, and claiming a personal place and office in the religion of the world; "teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 18).

We have thus far looked only at the Gospel of Matthew, and gleaned but a small part of the proofs which it affords. If we turn to the Gospel of John, their abundance is so great, that the recital of them would be simply to read the Gospel itself. When accused of violating the sabbath day, Jesus answered, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John v. 17). What was the point of that answer? It was as if he had said, "The creative and sustaining power of God is not suspended on the sabbath day, and under the same divine authority I go on to work." The words were so striking, that the Jews thought them blasphemous; and he explained them by saying that he did not speak of independent authority (John v. 19). He declared himself, in the strong, figurative language of Scripture, more forcible than literal words, to be "the bread from heaven" (John vi. 51, 53) which every man must eat, to partake of the heavenly life. Again he said, with great solemnity, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink: he that believeth on me, out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water" (John vii. 37). At another time, varying the expression but repeating the

same idea, he said, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John viii. 12). He called himself the door through which every man must pass (John x. 1); the vine upon which all living branches must grow, in order to bear any fruit (John xv. 1). In more literal words, he said, "No man cometh to the Father but by me" (John xiv. 6). When asserting his power to fulfil his promises, he said, "My Father who gave them me is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one" (John x. 29). The Jews again misunderstood him; and he explained himself as claiming delegated, not independent, power.

We are confining ourselves, you will observe, to Christ's own language concerning himself; and I have purposely avoided exceptional passages, and those which are of doubtful interpretation. The quotations given are such as to indicate the general tone of the Gospels. It is the tone of judicial authority, which could rightly be used by a divine ambassador, who knew himself to be speaking the words of divine truth, the commands of a divine law, the promises of divine love, the threatenings of divine justice. Imagine it to be assumed by any other, and it would be either blasphemy or madness. Nor can you get rid of it by any degree of critical boldness or ingenuity. Expurgate all such claims from Christ's words, and there would not be enough left to constitute a personality. The mythical system of Strauss, which is the destruction, not the expurgation, of history, would be the only result.

In this respect, at least, the life-like history of Jesus, by Renan, to which I have already referred, will do good. He makes Jesus a real personage, and divests him of all mythical appearance; so that we feel sure that such a person lived at the time, and under the circumstances, and

among the people, described in the Gospel history. But, admitting so much as this, how can we help going further? How can we avoid admitting that this Jesus being, as is supposed, a good and true man, made claims to a dignity altogether inconsistent with the idea, we do not say of advanced goodness, but even of common honesty? Listen to those words, which he spoke with such awful solemnity, and from which every believer continually derives hope and strength: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John xi. 25). And again he said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John xiv. 6). And yet again, "This is the will of Him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (John vi. 40). "For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself, and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John v. 26). "For as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father" (John v. 21). "Verily, verily I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live" (John v. 25). Interpret the words as you will, whether of the resurrection from sin to spiritual life, or from the grave to immortality, the language is utterly incompre-

hensible, as spoken by an honest man, without peculiar divine authority. They are imposture or madness or inspiration. Imagine them to be spoken by the best man you know, or of whom you may have read in history, and you will see how impossible they are, except under one of those suppositions. It is not only that the words are strong in themselves, and in the spiritual truth conveyed, but that they are made personal to Christ himself, as the agent of their fulfilment. Separate them from him, the speaker, and they are altogether lost. They are not abstract propositions to be proved, but personal testimony to be believed. We may verify them by the spiritual experience of personal faith; but we cannot abstract them from Jesus himself, who first proved their truth, and gave it to us as the established law of life, without denying its veracity at the same time. The Christian system is "the truth as it is in Jesus," not in abstract propositions. We cannot hold to it as Christian truth; or, at least, I cannot, when we have falsified him.

According to my reading of the Scripture, therefore, the first proposition concerning Jesus Christ is fully proved. Whether we can fix the exact point of his elevation or not, and however ignorant we may be of his essential nature, as indeed we are ignorant of our own, we have abundant evidence from his own words and demeanor, that he occupied an exceptional place, both in relation to God and man, to do a work peculiar to himself, for the glory of God, and for the salvation of the world.

It remains to prove the second proposition, that his own words and conduct equally declare a limitation of authority, and his entire dependence upon God.



CHRIST, THE SON OF MAN.

BY W. G. ELIOT, D.D.

"I have not spoken of myself; but the Father that sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak."—
JOHN xii. 50.

IN my last discourse, we considered Christ's "record of himself," to prove that he claimed the dignity and authority requisite for the office he came to fulfil, in the redemption of the world from sin, and to make known the heavenly Father. It was an easy task, for the Gospels are full of such testimony; and the strength of his expressions is so great, that we do not wonder at their having been interpreted to mean more than was intended by himself. It is always the tendency, in every new religion or philosophy, for the disciples to magnify their master, so as to reflect glory both upon his work and their own. Probably, no instance can be given of an opposite tendency, in the whole history of philosophies and religions, since the world began. Accordingly, we find, in the early preaching of the Apostles, that they were almost at a loss how to express their love and veneration for him whom they had followed for the redemption of Israel. A careful examination of their words would, however, show that they never forgot the difference between the Father and the Son, between the Ambassador and the Sovereign who sends him, between the Mediator who effects the reconciliation, and the infinite Law-giver who establishes the terms of acceptance. In subsequent

ages, this manifest distinction was gradually lost; but it required three full centuries and more to bring the creed of Christendom to its denial. The progress of change may be clearly marked in ecclesiastical history, step by step, from the confession made by Peter and his brethren,—“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,”—to that most wonderful of all human compositions, written in the fifth century, called the Athanasian Creed. Such historical inquiries, however, are difficult and cumbersome. The language of the Apostles themselves, in their letters to the churches, is sometimes indefinite, and frequently hard of interpretation.

We must return, therefore, to Christ himself, as the best, if not the only sure, source of knowledge. The more desirous we are of doing him honor, the more confidently must we rest our faith, at last, upon his own words. We appeal to them therefore, again, in this second part of our argument, as the final and conclusive authority. If he declared a limitation of his nature and attributes, no articles of faith nor ecclesiastical authority, nor ingenuity of argument, can justify us in asserting that such limitation does not exist.

In the first place, we refer to the general tone of Christ's words and intercourse with his disciples to prove the limitations of his nature and authority, in the same manner as we referred to them to prove their elevation and extent. Negatively speaking, this argument is very strong. Try to imagine what would have been the tone and demeanor of one who was conscious of being, in some sense or other, the Infinite God; of one who spoke by his own independent authority, and who possessed, in himself, the attributes of self-existence, omnipresence, and almighty power. I think that your familiarity with the Gospels will show you, at once, how different it would have been from what we

actually read concerning Jesus of Nazareth. Certainly, his disciples, even those nearest to him, did not understand him as asserting the claim of equality with the Father. He was their friend, their kinsman, whom they gradually learned to recognize as the Messiah promised to Israel, and to whom the higher title, "Son of the Living God," could be justly given. But they questioned him with perfect freedom, expostulated with him, and once, at least, rebuked him. One of them betrayed him; all of them forsook him; and, when he was put to death, they thought it was an end of all, and that the hope of Israel was extinguished. They came to embalm his body, and refused to believe the fact of his resurrection until proved to them beyond their power of denial. How can we account for this, if his general intercourse with them, or his words concerning himself, had been those of one claiming for himself the attributes of deity?

But the argument does not rest upon this negative view. If we carefully examine Christ's language, and accompany him in the Gospel history, as he went from place to place, going about to do good, speaking the words of truth, giving the promises of eternal life, the most striking feature in the whole will be his habitual reference of every thing to God the Father. His humility and piety are as remarkable as his tone of authority, and the two traits are inseparable from each other. In his miracles, he appealed to the power of God, as that by which alone he was able to work (John v. 19, 30). He claimed to be heard and believed, because the words that he spoke were not his own, but the Father's who sent him (John vii. 16). His language and conduct were those of an ambassador, who came, not to do his own will, but the will of the Father in heaven. The highest title that he claimed, or permitted to be used concerning him, was "The Son of God;" a title which in

itself clearly implies derivation and dependence, and as clearly is inconsistent with self-existence. In several instances, he distinctly denies the attributes of deity: "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God" (Matt. xix. 17; Mark x. 18). "To sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to give; but it shall be given to those for whom it is prepared of my Father in heaven" (Matt. xx. 23). "Of that day and hour knoweth no man; no, not the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father" (Mark xiii. 32; Matt. xxiv. 36). Such language may be consistent with very high exaltation; but, if it does not declare limitation and dependence, no words could possibly do so.

There is one fact, however, which pervades the whole life of Jesus, which is to me more forcible than any words could be. I mean the fact that he lived a life of prayer and thanksgiving. He spent whole nights in prayer, and looked up to God, as he taught us to look up, in all times of trial and difficulty. Not only in the beginning of his ministry, but throughout its continuance and at its close, in the Garden of Gethsemane and upon the Cross, he prayed to God as one who absolutely depended upon him, and gave thanks to God for whatever he received or was able to accomplish. (See Heb. v. 7, 8, 9.) How can we reconcile this fact, which no one will deny, with the assertion made by a part of the Christian Church, but never made by Christ himself, of absolute equality with the Father? If in any sense, and by whatever mystery of union, the Divine power was inherent in himself, how would prayer and thanksgiving have been possible? Or should we not be obliged to regard it, as some have done, as an outward show for the sake of the example? It would have been only the seeming of prayer, a self-communion, and not that which it evidently was, the outpouring of his

whole soul, the expression of absolute self-consecration to the Almighty God. "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me! nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. xxvi. 39). "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. xxvii. 46). "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke xxiii. 46).

I ask you to observe the peculiar force of this argument, and that it cannot be fairly met by the theory of a double nature in Christ, according to which he was both God and man. For prayer is the most interior of all spiritual experience, and is of necessity addressed to one higher than him who prays. To suppose a twofold consciousness in Christ, one conscious mind *praying* to the other, while the two are indissolubly connected with each other to constitute one person, would be to use language which both Trinitarian and Unitarian disavow, and which is so obscure that no intelligent thought of prayer would remain. He who prays truly and heartily, as Christ evidently prayed, declares the limitation of his whole nature, and the absolute supremacy of the Most High. I desire to treat the opinions of all persons with respect; and we know that some things which seem absurd to us are credible to others, because they see them at a different point of view, so that, perhaps using the same words, they mean a different thing: but I must frankly say, that I cannot comprehend how any one, who believes that Jesus Christ really prayed to God for strength and gave thanks to God for support, can also believe, in any intelligible sense of the words, that Jesus Christ was himself God, self-existent in being, independent in power.

It is not that we object to the word "mystery," or to the idea conveyed by it. To deny the fact of mystery, infinite and inscrutable, would be to stultify one's self. Human arrogance and folly can scarcely go so far. Mystery is the

law and condition of our lives. It is the infinite space which everywhere surrounds us. It is the eternity in which we live. It is the omnipresent power which sustains and directs us, while our conscious freedom is still uncontrolled. Mystery is but another word to express the fact of our ignorance and the limitations of our being. The little that we know is barely enough to indicate the infinity of knowledge and truth beyond us. "It is as high as heaven, what canst thou know? deeper than hell, what canst thou do?" The sphere of our knowledge is very small, compared with that in which faith alone must be our guide.

But we must not deceive ourselves with words. The acknowledgment of mystery does not imply belief in contradictions. If two propositions are contradictory in terms, we may perceive the contradiction, although there may remain a great deal, in the given case, of which we know nothing. If, under the name of mystery, you tell me that two parallel lines, sufficiently produced, will meet and ultimately coincide, or that a part is equal to the whole, you tell me that which is no mystery, and which we require very little knowledge to refute. It is manifestly untrue. And so, in religious inquiry, there are axioms of faith of which we may be just as sure as if we knew every thing. We cannot define the nature of God, nor can we define the nature of Jesus Christ; but if we believe that Christ is a conscious, intelligent, spiritual being, who, according to his own words, derived his being and authority from God, and habitually looked to God the Father, both in prayer and thanksgiving, as the source of all strength and life, we cannot consistently, at the same time, believe that God and Christ are the same being, or that, being different, they are equal to each other. Still less can we assert equality and identity, and the relation of depen-

dence, at one and the same time. The word "mystery" does not cover such inconsistencies of thought. For my own part, in the attempt to reconcile them, I either lose the idea of God in that of Jesus Christ, or the idea of Christ in that of God. But the Bible requires no such confusion of thought; and we prefer to rest in the words of Christ himself: "This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" (John xvii. 3); words which were uttered in prayer, at a time when his earthly ministry was almost finished.

We have already alluded to the usual method of avoiding the argument now presented. A twofold nature is claimed for Jesus Christ, by which he was perfect God and perfect man at the same time. But there are two reasons why this answer fails, even if we are able to attach an intelligible meaning to it. In the first place, it is not asserted that Jesus had a double consciousness; for, on the contrary, unity of person and of consciousness is claimed for him. He must have spoken, therefore, and thought and acted at each particular time, as an individual. When he said "I" and "me," he must have meant *himself*, as he actually was when speaking, in his whole being. He was so understood and gave no intimation whatever of meaning any thing else. To assert that he spoke sometimes in one nature and sometimes in another, without giving intimation how he was to be understood; and, still more, that, in the same conversations, he alternated from one to the other, without explanation,—would be equivalent to asserting that we cannot understand him at all. The supposition is inconsistent with the plainness, simplicity, and truthfulness of Christ's words; and no teacher of religious truth would consent to such a rule of equivocal and ambiguous instruction. When Jesus said, "My Father is greater than I" (John xiv. 28); and again, "I ascend to my

Father and your Father, to my God and your God" (John x^x. 17); and again, "I can do nothing of myself" (John v. 30), — which was his common method of speaking, — there is but one fair and just mode of interpretation. We have no right to interpret the Bible by rules of criticism which would change any other book into prevarication and falsehood.

For another reason, the theory of a double nature fails in its purpose. Taking Christ's own language as our guide, the passages in which he claims the highest and most mysterious exaltation, and which therefore must refer to his highest nature, whatever it may be, are the same in which he most distinctly asserts the limitation both of authority and being. For example, the words, "No man knoweth the Son but the Father, and no man knoweth the Father but the Son" (Matt. xi. 27), — indicate an intimacy and exclusiveness of communion greater perhaps than anywhere else expressed. But they are immediately preceded by the words, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father," and by thanksgiving to God, by whom this elevation, however great, had been conferred: "I thank thee, O Father! Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." He speaks of the glory in which he was to come, as "the glory of his Father." In the judgment scene, when he represents himself as the King, he says, "Come, ye blessed of my Father" (Matt. xxv. 34). When asserting his power to overthrow his enemies, he said, "Think ye not that I could pray to my Father, and he would give me twelve legions of angels?" (Matt. xxvi. 53). Before the judgment-seat of Pilate, when asserting his own future triumph, he still speaks of delegated authority: "The Son of man shall sit on the right hand of power" (Matt. xxvi. 64). When he said, "All

power is given to me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. xxviii. 18), the words contain their own limitation, in the word "given," which implies a superior from whom the power is received, and makes it consistent with the special limitations of authority and power elsewhere expressed by Jesus himself. When Jesus said, "Glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John xvii. 5), we must not forget that they are words of prayer to God the Father.

I confidently challenge the Bible student to adduce a single passage of Scripture, where Christ speaks of himself in this exalted tone of authority and divine communion, in which he does not with equal distinctness declare that he spoke and worked and lived by the will and power of him whom he uniformly declared to be the only true God, the infinite and almighty Father.

But even if there were exceptions, and if we found general declarations of authority or power without limitation expressed at the same time, they would give us no embarrassment; for this is the peculiar force of the argument we are now using, that a particular negation, at any one time, has the effect of limiting all general expressions upon the same subject. Thus, if I were to say that a dictator has absolute control of all the affairs of the nation, and were to repeat the assertion a hundred times, with ever so strong language, but were to introduce a single sentence declaring that he has no control over religious affairs or over the domestic relations of society, that one expression of limitation would cover the whole ground, and modify the whole statement. It would be no longer an absolute dictatorship, but one with limited powers.

Again, although no such special limitation was directly spoken of, it might be as clearly and distinctly expressed by reference to a higher authority, as that under which all

the power possessed is exercised. Thus, if we should speak of a dictatorship established by the people, with absolute powers, it would not be understood as independent of the authority by which created; but, on the contrary, as restrained, and subject to discontinuance by the same power which established it. If that responsibility and ultimate obedience were denied, the dictatorship would become a usurpation, and the republic would be destroyed. However unlimited within a certain range of action, the higher authority still remains and must be acknowledged; and its acknowledgment is in itself the clearest expression of limitation and dependence. No statement of delegated powers can convey the force of independent supremacy.

You will perceive how closely this bears upon the subject in hand. Christ always refers directly to God the Father as the source of all his authority. He claimed to be heard and obeyed, because he spake what he had been commanded to speak,—as when he said, “The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son” (John v. 22). And again, when he claimed the power of raising the dead, in one of the most remarkable passages of the Bible, he says, “For, as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself, and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man” (John v. 26, 27). Is it not strange that this same language is quoted to prove the self-existence of Christ? If he has “life in himself,” it is argued, and if, as said just before, “he giveth life to whom he will,” does not that imply self-existence and independent power? not observing, apparently, that the same sentence declares the source both of the power and the life, and the reason for their being given. “The Father hath given to the Son to have life in himself” is a denial of self-existence, not its assertion. “The Father

hath given him authority to execute judgment" is a denial of independent power, however great that power may be. Accordingly, we find, in the same conversation, and only two verses later, the following sentence: "I can of mine own self do nothing; as I hear I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John v. 30).

We contend that there is no passage in the Scripture where Christ claims higher exaltation, both of nature and of office, than in this which we have now considered, in which we find such clear and unequivocal declaration of *derived* existence and *limited* authority. If such language, under such circumstances, can be set aside, I do not see how it would have been possible for Christ to have guarded himself from misconstruction. If those words do not express limitation and dependence, then no words whatever could have done it.

Let me remind you that I am arguing only to a single point; namely, the fact of limitation. We are not speaking of degrees of exaltation, nor denying any thing short of the Infinite and Supreme. That would be a matter of subsequent inquiry, comparatively insignificant in importance. However exalted the nature and authority of Christ, so long as the fact of derivation and dependence is admitted, as he himself declared it, the difference between finite and infinite remains, with the absolute supremacy of the Father, whom he made known to us as "the only true God." Such is evidently the argument of the Apostle Paul, whose language concerning Christ is often misunderstood. In the midst of his most glowing language, speaking of Christ's kingdom, "when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power," he adds these final and conclusive words: "But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that He is excepted, which did

put all things under him; and when all things shall be subdued under him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto Him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. xv. 28).

We conclude, therefore, that Jesus did not assert for himself the supremacy of nature and attributes which subsequent times asserted for him, but that he distinctly and uniformly declared the fact of derivation, of limitation, of dependence. He was the Son of God, and declared to be so, with power to make known the will of God, to manifest the character of God, to reconcile the world to God; but in all he was the messenger of God's love, who came forth from the Father to do and to speak whatever his Father commanded him. They are his own words, and we can find no authority for going beyond them. We prove our allegiance to Christ himself by thus receiving him. We stand up for Jesus by refusing to add any thing to his testimony. We honor the Son as we honor the Father, by accepting the words of Christ concerning the Father and concerning himself. We repeat them, and would write them all over our Church and upon the living tablets of our hearts: "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

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